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The Compatibility of Freedom and Necessity in Marx's Idea of Communist Society

David James

The realm of freedom really begins only where labour determined by necessity [*Not*] and external expediency [*äußere Zweckmäßigkeit*] ends; it lies by its very nature beyond the sphere of material production proper. Just as the savage must wrestle with nature to satisfy his needs, to maintain and reproduce his life, so must civilized man, and he must do so in all forms of society and under all possible modes of production. This realm of natural necessity [*Naturnotwendigkeit*] expands with his development, because his needs do too; but the productive forces to satisfy these expand at the same time. Freedom, in this sphere, can consist only in this, that socialized man, the associated producers, govern the human metabolism [*Stoffwechsel*] with nature in a rational way, bringing it under their collective control instead of being dominated by it as a blind power; accomplishing it with the least expenditure of energy and in conditions most worthy and appropriate for their human nature. But this always remains a realm of necessity. The true realm of freedom, the development of human powers as an end in itself [*als Selbstzweck*], begins beyond it, though it can only flourish with this realm of necessity as its basis. The reduction of the working day is the basic prerequisite. (Marx and Engels 1956-1990: 25, 828; Marx 1991: 958-959)

In this well-known passage from the third volume of *Capital*, Marx opposes the 'true realm of freedom' to the 'realm of necessity'. In the latter human beings are subject to constraints that are generated by their having to labour to satisfy material needs. This gives rise to a practical form of necessity which consists in having to do something independently of what one desires to do. This opposition between freedom and necessity applies to modern industrial societies, because the restricted, mechanical nature of the forms of labour performed by many people in these societies make it difficult to see how individuals would choose to work in the absence of ends that are external to the act of working itself, thereby reducing this act to a means to an end. The fact that Marx himself views labour that is necessary when it comes to satisfying society's material needs as incompatible with genuine freedom, is suggested by his claim that the shortening of the working day is the basic condition of the true realm of freedom which has the realm of material necessity as its basis.

The opposition between the freedom that individuals enjoy outside work and the necessity of labour has generated discussion concerning the precise nature of this opposition and whether the passage from the third volume of *Capital* quoted above shows that Marx's views on labour underwent a fundamental change.¹ As we shall see, in his early writings Marx characterizes work that individuals are compelled to perform as alienated labour, and he contrasts this type of labour with a situation in which 'man produces even when he is free from physical need and truly produces only in freedom from such need' (Marx and Engels 1956-1990: 40, 517; Marx 1992: 329). When read in conjunction with the passage from the third volume of *Capital*, this statement implies that human beings produce things in a genuinely free manner *only* when they do not have to work to satisfy their material needs. It appears, then, that alienated labour would continue to exist in communist society simply in virtue of the fact that human beings must continue to labour to satisfy such needs. Yet, as we shall see, some of Marx's claims concerning labour in his early writings indicate that it is only under certain conditions that labour aimed at meeting material needs must be viewed as essentially unfree, so that the fact that labour is socially necessary does not by itself exclude the possibility of freedom. Moreover, in the later *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, Marx claims that in a higher phase of communist society labour becomes 'not merely a means to live but the foremost need in life' (Marx and Engels 1956-1990: 19, 21; Marx 1996: 214). Here the act of working appears to possess an intrinsic value, and there is no suggestion, therefore, that work performed as a matter of material necessity must lack such value. I shall argue that this intrinsic value has in part to do with how, for Marx, freedom and necessity can, under the right conditions, be made compatible, even if the fact of having to work to meet society's material needs limits the extent to which freedom is possible within the sphere of material production.

It has been argued that for Marx even 'necessary' labour in the sphere of material production can be a free and self-realizing activity under the right conditions because human practical activity, unlike the instinctive behaviour of non-human animals, is always to some extent free activity (Sayers 2011: 65-69). Simply working on an object, irrespective of the particular form of labour involved, in this respect necessarily represents a manifestation of freedom compared to the act of merely consuming an object. This argument has the virtue of making sense of Marx's claim that even in the realm of necessity there is some freedom. Yet it is susceptible to the criticism that one could grant that human labour, whatever its particular form, is essentially different from the instinctive behaviour of non-human animals, but also claim that the difference in question is not so great in the case of certain forms of labour to warrant speaking of degrees of freedom rather than degrees of necessity. In other words,

although human beings are free in the sense of not obeying instinct alone, they must still be thought to work as a matter of necessity alone, in the sense that they would not work if other options were available, because for them the act of working, even in communist society, lacks any intrinsic value.

For Marx, it is impossible for there to be a society and mode of production that did not require human interaction with nature whose aim is to satisfy material needs. He accordingly describes this type of labour as ‘an eternal natural necessity’ (Marx and Engels 1956-1990: 23, 57; Marx 1990: 133). This necessity increases with the expansion of needs, which is itself determined by developments in the means of production. This is not the only way in which there arises the possibility of major historical differences in the way in which human beings are subject to natural necessity, since the production process can be organized in fundamentally different ways, as has indeed happened in the course of human history. I shall argue that the claim that labour which aims to satisfy material needs can nevertheless be a free and self-realizing activity under the conditions established in communist society requires understanding the compatibility of freedom and necessity in a way that does not demand treating human labour as such as being intrinsically free. The compatibility that Marx has in mind instead concerns the idea of socialized human beings, as ‘the associated producers’, regulating material production in a rational way so as to bring both nature and the productive forces under their collective control and thereby avoid being dominated by a blind power. Essentially, it is the way in which production is organized by the workers themselves, rather than the activity of working taken by itself, that allows some room for freedom in the realm of necessity, and thus the possibility of working in conditions that are the most appropriate to, and worthy of, human nature. This interpretation of how freedom and necessity are compatible in the ‘realm of necessity’ will also provide the means of understanding how the act of working can in the realm of necessity possess an intrinsic value, albeit of a limited kind.

In this way, I demonstrate that two plausible ways of explaining the difference between freedom in the ‘realm of necessity’ and freedom in the ‘true’ realm of freedom as presented in the third volume of *Capital* rely on distinctions that are ultimately too clear-cut. The first way is to argue that the freedom enjoyed in the realm of necessity concerns collective self-determination understood in a broadly Kantian way, whereas the more complete freedom that individuals enjoy beyond the sphere of material production concerns self-realization understood in a broadly Aristotelian way (Kandiyali 2014: 108-110). The second way of explaining the difference between the realm of necessity and the realm of true freedom is to argue that within the former work, although not worthless, is not an end in itself, that is to say,

it lacks any intrinsic value, whereas in the true realm of freedom individuals engage in activities that are ends in themselves (Klagge 1986). I shall argue (1) that although collective self-determination is indeed a characteristic feature of the realm of necessity in communist society, self-realization is, to some extent, also a characteristic feature of it, and (2) that although work has an instrumental value in the realm of necessity, it may to some extent also possess an intrinsic value, and, what is more, in virtue of how it allows individuals to realize themselves, if only in a limited way. It is not, therefore, a matter of *either* collective self-determination *or* individual self-realization, *either* engagement in activities that have only a purely instrumental value *or* engagement in activities that possess an intrinsic value. Rather, self-determination and self-realization, instrumental value and intrinsic value, are to varying degrees all present in the realm of necessity as it would be in communist society. Moreover, I shall indicate one good reason that Marx has for not wanting to distinguish the realm of necessity from the true realm of freedom in a way that would exclude self-realization and intrinsic value from the first of these realms.

Admittedly, the two positions mentioned above command some strong textual support in the passage from the third volume of *Capital* quoted earlier. Marx states that the realm of freedom ‘by its very nature’ (*der Natur der Sache nach*) lies beyond the sphere of material production and thus beyond the realm of necessity. This implies the existence of an essential qualitative difference that the distinction between collective self-determination and individual self-realization promises to capture. Marx also states that the development of human powers ‘as an end in itself’ characterizes the true realm of freedom. This suggests that it is only beyond the realm of necessity that human beings engage in activities that possess an intrinsic value. Given that the term ‘freedom’ can signify different things, however, and that Marx allows that freedom of some kind is possible in the realm of necessity, we must ask what Marx actually means by the term ‘freedom’ in each case. In particular, we need to ask whether he treats the realm of necessity and the realm of true freedom as separate spheres in virtue of how they involve essentially different *types* of freedom, or whether he regards the second realm as exhibiting to a greater extent than the first one the *same* type of freedom as the freedom that human beings begin to enjoy in the realm of necessity.

I shall argue that, despite his claim that the realm of freedom ‘by its very nature’ lies beyond the sphere of material production, Marx can, in fact, be seen to adopt the second position. This is because he operates with a concept of freedom that incorporates various *aspects* of freedom, each of which can be present to a greater or lesser degree. This concept of freedom cannot be reduced to any of its constituent parts. A condition in which freedom is

present, as Marx claims it is even in the realm of necessity in communist society, must therefore to some extent embody all the aspects of this concept of freedom. Thus it is not, strictly speaking, a matter of a hierarchy of different types of freedom, even if one aspect of freedom is lower in the sense of being a condition of the exercise of another one. This will in turn enable me to argue that the realm of necessity in communist society is not one in which self-determination exists while self-realization is absent, nor one in which human activity lacks any intrinsic value. Thus reading the passage from the third volume of *Capital* quoted earlier in the light of Marx's idea of freedom paves the way for a more nuanced view of the difference between freedom in the realm of necessity, as it will be in communist society, and freedom in the realm of true freedom. I shall accordingly begin with an attempt to reconstruct Marx's account of freedom and then go on to relate it to the constraints generated by the fact of having to labour to satisfy material needs as encountered in capitalist society. This will provide the basis of my discussion of the compatibility of freedom and necessity in communist society.

Marx on Freedom and Constraint in Capitalist Society

Marx's account of freedom is complex and it must in large part be reconstructed on the basis of what he says about other concepts or phenomena. I shall identify three interrelated types of freedom that are central to Marx's critique of capitalism, from which his concept of freedom can be gleaned:

(1) Negative freedom understood as the absence of constraints in an obvious sense, as with physical force exercised by a stronger party in relation to a weaker one, or as the absence of constraints that in effect compel human beings to do something independently of what they desire to do and what they would choose to do if other options were available to them.

(2) An expressive form of freedom which is negative in nature in so far as it consists in encountering no obstacles to the exercise and development of certain distinctively human capacities through practical engagement with the world on the part of individuals acting alone or in association with others. At the same time, however, this expressive freedom has a positive dimension, in that human beings are thereby able to realize the potential which comes from their possession of these capacities. As we shall see, these capacities can be identified with the capacities associated with free agency in particular.² If an individual is conscious of his or her possession of these capacities, he

or she is likely to experience a sense of frustration when encountering obstacles to their exercise and development. Yet even if an individual is not conscious of possessing these capacities, as may well happen if he or she lacks the opportunity to exercise and thereby develop them, we can speak of a waste of human potential that is likely to generate a sense of frustration, even if the grounds of this sense of frustration remain opaque to the individual who experiences it. For Marx, alienated labour is a form of activity that does not allow for the exercise and development of essential human capacities, and for this reason he describes it as a form of activity that is ‘wholly alien to itself, to man and to nature, and hence to consciousness and the expression of life [*Lebensäußerung*]’ (Marx and Engels 1956-1990: 40, 524; Marx 1992: 336; translation modified)

(3) Autonomy in the specific sense captured by Jean-Jacques Rousseau in his description of ‘moral’ freedom as that which ‘alone makes man truly the master of himself; for the impulsion of mere appetite is slavery, and obedience to the law one has prescribed to oneself is freedom’ (Rousseau 1997: 54).

Although freedom in senses (1) and (2) imply that freedom and constraint are incompatible, this is not the case with freedom in sense (3). Absence of constraint is, nevertheless, a condition of autonomy, for one could not act autonomously if one’s actions were determined by purely external constraints. Moreover, as we shall see, self-realization in the sphere of material production in communist society, and thus freedom in sense (2), is for Marx essentially connected with the exercise of autonomy. Indeed, there is an internal connection between self-realization and self-determination, and thus between expressive freedom and autonomy, both here and in the ‘true’ realm of freedom, in that the capacity for self-determination is an essentially human one whose exercise is, therefore, key to how human beings are able to realize themselves and their *human* nature. Given this internal connection between self-realization and self-determination, we can already see how there might be a problem with the claim that self-determination is possible in the realm of necessity while self-realization belongs to the true realm of freedom that lies beyond the sphere of material production. Rather, any effective exercise of the capacity for self-determination will be accompanied by a corresponding degree of self-realization.

To the extent that the constraints to which individuals are subject can be viewed as products of self-determination, expressive freedom is also compatible with the existence of constraints, rather than being something that demands the absence of constraint altogether. In

fact, expressive freedom requires both negative freedom and autonomy, because the opportunity to develop and objectify essential human capacities requires not only the absence of obstacles to their exercise and development but also control over the conditions under which these capacities are exercised. Among these conditions we can include the opportunity to determine what these conditions are, and the act of determining this matter will itself represent an exercise of autonomy, and thus an instance of self-realization. Autonomy or self-determination would not be possible, however, if an agent's actions were determined by factors that are wholly independent of his or her own will, and this form of freedom therefore requires negative freedom in the broad sense of the absence of purely external constraints. In this respect expressive freedom unites negative freedom and moral freedom, resulting in a single concept of freedom that contains within itself all the three aspects of freedom identified above.

As we shall see, the negative aspect of Marx's account of freedom specifically concerns the absence of constraints whose ultimate source can be located in economic and social forces that are independent of the wills of individuals and even the will of society as a whole, or, to be more precise, are believed to be so. These forces exhibit law-like regularities, and in this respect they can be treated as the manifestations of certain quasi-natural laws. Marx himself alludes to the idea that economic forces exhibit the type of necessity associated with natural laws when he speaks of tendencies, whose basis is found in the laws of capitalist production, as 'winning their way through and working themselves out with iron necessity' (Marx and Engels 1956-1990, 23, 12; Marx 1990: 91). The idea that economic and social forces exhibit a quasi-natural necessity can also be detected in Marx's criticisms of the way in which 'vulgar' political economy treats, in an ideological manner, historically contingent economic or social forms as naturally given. He claims, for example, that the so-called trinity formula, which consists of the factors of production – capital, land and labour - together with their respective forms of revenue - interest, rent and wages - as understood by such economic thinking, 'corresponds to the self-interest of the dominant classes, since it preaches the natural necessity and perpetual justification of their sources of income and erects this into a dogma' (Marx and Engels 1956-1990: 25, 838-839; Marx 1991: 969). Here it is implied that the necessity in question is in fact illusory. These economic categories and phenomena are necessary only in relation to the workings of a particular economic system, and the possibility of abolishing this system reveals their essentially contingent nature. In other words, economic and social categories and phenomena may well be necessary in relation to the system to which they belong at the same time as they are contingent in virtue of the contingency of the same economic and social system. There are people, however, who have an interest in the continued existence of a

particular economic and social system, leading them to present it and its fundamental categories as something natural to which human thought and agency must simply accommodate themselves. The impersonal forces that govern such a system generate constraints that are so restrictive that in effect they determine the will of any agent that is subject to them, whether this agent be an individual or a social class. These practical constraints, which are not identical with the impersonal economic and social forces that are their source, may be explicit ones, such as legal constraints that function to stabilize and maintain an economic and social system over time. These constraints may, however, equally possess an informal character that can be explained in terms of interpersonal or intergroup relations based on differences in economic and social power. As we shall shortly see, Marx himself is especially interested in informal constraints that are connected with differences in bargaining power in a free market.

Marx's understanding of how individuals are subject to constraints imposed upon them by the capitalist mode of production is evident from his description of work that one is compelled to perform – he himself speaks of labour that is ‘not voluntary [*freiwillig*] but ... *forced labour* [*Zwangsarbeit*]’ - as alienated labour, and from how at the same time he speaks of work as ‘not the satisfaction of a need but a mere *means* to satisfy needs outside itself’ (Marx and Engels 1956-1990: 40, 514; Marx 1992: 326). In other words, the act of working is ‘external’ to the worker, even though it is the worker's own act, in the sense that he or she works simply to survive, whereas no human being in such a situation would, or so it is assumed, willingly work in such circumstances if another meaningful option were available to him or her. The act of working therefore lacks the intrinsic value it would possess if individuals were to engage in this act for its own sake. Instead, the worker engages in productive activity only as a matter of necessity, whereas ‘as soon as no physical or other compulsion [*Zwang*] exists it is shunned like the plague’ (Marx and Engels 1956-1990: 40, 514; Marx 1992: 326). In this case, however, the only other option is starvation, and Marx clearly rejects the notion that something can be ‘voluntary’ simply in virtue of being chosen on the basis of a desire that one happens to have, and which in this case would be the desire for self-preservation.³

If the brute fact that the desire on which an agent acts is that agent's own desire is not sufficient to class an act as a voluntary one, the following question arises: what are the other conditions of voluntary action? We may assume that these conditions include the availability of other meaningful options when it comes to satisfying a desire that one has, unless, as with a desire for purely luxury goods, the desire is of such a kind that having to forego its satisfaction in the face of a lack of acceptable options would not result in a fundamental human interest being harmed.⁴ None of this requires, however, the absence of any antecedent cause which

determines the will, or that the available options are extensive both in terms of number and in terms of range, a requirement that may, in fact, end up reducing actual choice to a purely arbitrary matter. The requirement is only that an agent's choices are not constrained to the point that there are no other meaningful options available to him or her when it comes to pursuing a fundamental human interest, including the end of securing the material conditions of life as determined by a particular stage of historical development. Although the pursuit of this end is incompatible with freedom when an individual has no choice but to work, given the absence of other meaningful options, this is not to say that this end cannot figure at all among the reasons that an agent has for working in cases where freedom is possible.

This negative freedom, which consists in the absence of objective conditions that constrain an agent's will because they result in no other meaningful options being available to him or her, has an instrumental value in relation to the expressive freedom described earlier. The importance of this expressive freedom is evident from certain features of Marx's account of alienation, which is based on the idea of a subject-object relation that represents an essential feature of all productive activity. The object is the product of labour, and this can broadly speaking be taken to mean any perceivable change or state of affairs brought about in the world by means of human labour (Wood 2004: 39). When the subject is able to identify itself with the object of its labour, and in this sense recognize itself in this object despite the object's independence, we have a type of self-objectification. For Marx, genuine self-objectification can be achieved only when the subject, through his or her productive activity, gives objective expression to essentially human capacities that would have otherwise remained latent, such as the power to conceive of an object in purely mental terms and then to give objective existence to this mental representation (*Vorstellung*) by means of one's own productive activity (Marx and Engels 1956-1990: 23, 193; Marx 1990: 285). In this way, an individual's conscious, purposeful activity and the results of this activity produce an external confirmation of his or her human essence. At the same time, he or she is able to realize him- or herself in the sense of exercising and developing certain powers associated with this essence by means of conscious activity which is free in the sense that it is performed in accordance with ends which the agent has formed and chooses to realize through its own activity. This self-objectification and self-realization is not possible, however, for workers in capitalist society. The following reason that Marx gives for this impossibility is especially relevant to his account of the possibility of freedom in the 'realm of necessity': 'the object that labour produces, its product, stands opposed to it as an *alien being* [*fremdes Wesen*], as a *power independent* of the producer' (Marx and Engels 1956-1990: 40, 511; Marx 1992: 324; translation modified).

This statement tells us that alienation occurs when that which the worker produces has an alien appearance and operates as a power that has become wholly independent of its creator. The alien appearance that the object assumes in relation to the individual who produced it is not simply the result of how the object now stands opposed to its creator in the literal sense of existing in separation from the worker in space and time. As we have seen, this state of affairs does not by itself exclude the possibility of self-objectification and self-realization. Marx claims that labour ‘is *external* to the worker, i.e. does not belong to his essential being [*Wesen*]; that he therefore does not confirm himself in his work, but denies himself, feels miserable and not happy, does not develop free mental and physical energy, but mortifies his flesh and ruins his mind’ (Marx and Engels 1956-1990: 40, 514; Marx 1992: 326). We have already seen how labour is external to the worker in the sense that it is reduced to a means to an end and therefore lacks intrinsic value. Here labour is ‘external’ in a different figurative sense, namely, that it is not expressive of what an agent essentially is, that is to say, a being that is capable of exercising and developing its mental and physical powers by means of conscious purposive activity. Moreover, we have a situation in which the external nature of the object, in the sense of its independent existence as an object that is perceivable through the senses, is made into an independent power that dominates its creator:

The externalization of the worker in his product means not only that his labour becomes an object, an *external* existence, but that it exists *outside him*, independently of him and alien to him, and begins to confront him as an autonomous power; that the life which he has bestowed on the object confronts him as hostile and alien. (Marx and Engels 1956-1990: 40, 512; Marx 1992: 324)

In relation to the way in which the object has become purely ‘external’, and thus ‘alien’, to the worker, I want to draw attention to a key point that concerns the relation of Marx’s explanation of the alienation that is an inevitable feature of the capitalist mode of production to the negative freedom described earlier. This point has to do with how the situation in question is ultimately to be explained in terms of the worker’s lack of control over the production process and the activities that he or she performs within this process, thereby making him or her into a passive victim of constraints that are generated by economic and social forces that operate independently of his or her own will.

The most immediate explanation of this lack of control is that the object does not belong to the worker. It is instead the private property of the capitalist who owns the means of

production, provides the materials upon which the worker labours and purchases the worker's labour-power for a specified period of time, during which time the capitalist is entitled to determine what the worker does. This state of affairs explains such manifestations of the alienation suffered by the worker as his or her complete indifference towards the product of his or her labour. The worker could, in fact, be producing absolutely anything, so long as it earns him or her a wage. Then there is the worker's alienation in relation to his or her own productive activity. The lack of control over his or her productive activity means that this activity, unless by some improbable happy coincidence, will not be an expression of the worker's own ideas and projects. This lack of control must itself, however, be explained in terms of the constraints generated by impersonal economic and social forces over which even the individual capitalist has no control, as Marx himself emphasizes when he states that, 'Under free competition, the immanent laws of capitalist production are made to confront the individual capitalist as an external coercive law [*äußerliches Zwangsgesetz*]' (Marx and Engels 1956-1990: 23, 286; Marx 1990: 381; translation modified). The situation is nevertheless worse for the worker because he or she is compelled, through his or her productive activity, to contribute to the creation and maintenance of the same forces that dominate him or her. What he or she produces enters the market as a commodity which, like all commodities, is produced with a view to its exchange value, and which, once sold, facilitates the expansion of capital and thus an increase in the power of capital over labour. In this way, the worker 'necessarily impoverishes himself ... because the creative power of his labour establishes itself as the power of capital, as an *alien power* confronting him' (Marx and Engels 1956-1990: 42, 228; Marx 1993: 307).

The worker is essentially unfree in capitalist society, then, not only because he or she lacks the opportunity for genuine creative and expressive activity in the workplace, but also because he or she is dominated by impersonal economic and social forces which he or she helps produce and maintain through his or her productive activity but cannot control. Rather, these forces are the source of constraints that make the enjoyment of expressive freedom virtually impossible for him or her. Gaining control of these forces would, in contrast, open up the possibility of creative and expressive acts that are performed within the production process itself, making the worker's productive activity and the results of this activity less 'external' or 'alien' to him or her, allowing self-realization to accompany the exercise of self-determination. Labour might then come to possess an intrinsic value as opposed to being nothing more than the means to end that is independent of it. This is because in these conditions the agent concerned may come to find the activity of working to be in itself fulfilling and rewarding because it involves the exercise of distinctively human capacities, whose development is not

possible independently of the act of exercising them. It is not the case, therefore, that, once achieved, it would be possible subsequently to enjoy the good in question after one had ceased to engage in activities that require the exercise of such capacities, as happens when an activity serves merely as the means of attaining a given end that is external to the activity itself. Thus, we can already begin to see how collective self-determination and individual self-realization might both be possible even in the realm of necessity. Control of the production process would, moreover, represent a condition of the negative freedom that consists in the absence of the type of constraint that explains the alienation suffered by workers in capitalist society, for by determining the conditions under which they labour, the workers would be able to remove this type of constraint, even if the constraints generated by the necessity of working to satisfy material needs would remain. Consequently, we can also begin to see how all three aspects of Marx's concept of freedom might be present in communist society in so far as the realm of necessity persists within this form of society.

The objection might here be made that Marx's negative account of freedom illegitimately extends the notion of what would count as a constraint on freedom. This would only be the case, however, if negative freedom is defined as the absence of forms of coercion that consist in deliberate interference with the activity or lives of others, and thus entail the existence of a conscious agent that engages in such acts of interference.⁵ Marx has good reasons for extending the notion of constraint to include constraints generated by impersonal economic and social forces, even though conscious agency cannot be plausibly attributed to these forces themselves. First of all, as I have already pointed out, the practical constraints generated by impersonal economic and social forces that exhibit (or are held to exhibit) a quasi-natural lawfulness are logically distinct from these forces themselves, and it is the absence of these constraints that matters. Nevertheless, regulating or abolishing these impersonal economic and social forces would be a condition of removing the constraints that they generate. This in turn makes it possible to talk of human intentions in relation to these constraints, even if, as is the case here, that which constrains the will of an agent is explained in terms of the workings of an impersonal economic and social system. For despite the difficulties involved in identifying a particular conscious agent that deliberately coerces others or interferes with their lives in some other way, individuals or social classes may nevertheless indirectly function as such an agent by consciously intending the existence or persistence of a particular economic and social system, or one or more of its fundamental conditions, such as a state of affairs in which some people have no choice but to sell their labour cheaply because of their lack of economic and social power. This would not require a conscious plan and careful coordination of individual

agents' actions with the aim of putting into effect such a plan, and nor does the element of intentional action need to be identified with state action in particular.⁶ Rather, it could be that shared class interests are sufficient to generate common objectives together with informal patterns of cooperation and coordination of actions that aim to realize these objectives. Members of the capitalist class may then be thought to act in accordance with a common but informal policy with the intention of stabilizing and preserving the capitalist economic and social system without, however, intending that proletarian agent *a* is prevented by constraint *x* from doing *y*. This policy may be one that this class pursues in association with others, such as the proponents of 'vulgar' political economy who, as we have seen, present historically contingent economic categories and relations as something natural to which human thought and agency must accommodate themselves. In pursuing a policy of encouraging widespread acceptance of an economic and social system that favours their interests, and in making others think that they are powerless to change this system, let alone abolish it, the members of this class and their defenders nevertheless intend that the proletariat as a class is prevented from doing, or from thinking it is able to do, certain things.⁷ There would then be a causal connection between that which an individual or collective agent intends and a state of affairs in which other agents are subject to constraints in a way that allows one to claim that their lives are interfered with in ways that are incompatible with one or more of their fundamental interests.

If, as I have argued, the workers' lack of control over what they do to secure the basic material conditions of life and human activity generates constraints that are incompatible with freedom even in the negative sense, gaining control over what they do will be a condition of this negative freedom as well as a condition of expressive freedom. Given that having control over what one does implies the capacity to determine what one does and how one does it, freedom in the negative freedom would ultimately depend on the exercise of moral freedom, as described by Rousseau, or what we would call autonomy. I shall now argue that the compatibility of freedom and necessity mentioned in the passage from the third volume of *Capital* quoted at the beginning of this essay can only be fully explained in terms of the crucial, if largely implicit, role played by the notion of autonomy or self-determination,⁸ and how all three aspects of Marx's concept of freedom are to some extent present in the 'realm of necessity'. The compatibility of freedom and necessity cannot, therefore, be explained independently of the idea of a condition in which socialized human beings regulate their interchange with nature in a rational way, so as not to be dominated by 'a blind power', and so as to labour in conditions that are 'most worthy and appropriate for their human nature', in the sense that these conditions allow individuals to work freely and thereby realize their human

essence in the production process. This will in turn allow us to think of the realm of necessity as a sphere in which human labour to some extent possesses an intrinsic value.

The Compatibility of Freedom and Constraint in the Realm of Necessity

Rousseau's claim that moral freedom 'alone makes man truly the master of himself; for the impulsion of mere appetite is slavery, and obedience to the law one has prescribed to oneself is freedom' points to the existence of a form of freedom whose essential character is as follows. Acting in accordance with brute desires is considered to be the opposite of genuine freedom because human beings would then simply obey given natural impulses and would not, therefore, engage in any act of willing at all. To *will* something human beings must exercise some degree of self-mastery. This requires exercising some degree of effective control over themselves, so that they are no longer at the mercy of immediate impulses that determine them to act in a purely instinctual manner. Rather, given their capacity to achieve a reflective distance between themselves and their given desires, human beings can evaluate their desires and, on the basis of their evaluation of them, choose whether or not to allow them to determine their actions. This capacity to evaluate given desires makes it possible to engage in acts of willing in accordance with some higher-order principle that an agent has adopted, enabling human beings to impose principles of action upon themselves. Freedom and constraint are compatible, then, in the sense that an agent is subject to restrictions whose source lies wholly or in large measure in the will of the agent. This conception of moral freedom is implicit in some of Marx's key claims and concepts, especially his notion of species-being (*Gattungswesen*), which he describes as follows:

Man is a species-being, not only because he practically and theoretically makes the species – both his own and those of other things – his object, but also – and this is simply another way of saying the same thing – because he looks upon himself as the present, living species, because he looks upon himself as a *universal* and therefore free being. (Marx and Engels 1956-1990: 40, 515; Marx 1992: 327)

I take this to mean that the capacity to become conscious of the defining attributes of the human species, as well as those of other species, is itself an essential human attribute. This capacity makes it possible for human beings to reflect on the nature of all their other essential attributes and to act in accordance with these attributes that form part of their conception of the human essence. Acting in accordance with their conception of the human essence requires interaction

with the material world confronting human beings, including the other species whose nature human beings are able to comprehend, thereby providing them with a theoretical knowledge which can aid their practical engagement with the material world. In so far as human beings act in their present historical situation according to the conception of the human essence that provides the standard in accordance with which they judge their own actions and the actions of others, they think and act as a ‘universal’ in the sense of having what is common to humankind as the object of their thoughts and actions. Human beings may think and act, in short, in accordance with a normative conception of what it means to be and to act as a *human* being.

The compulsion to work that exists in capitalist society is alienating precisely because it is incompatible with the conscious, free activity that defines the human species. As we have seen, the laws of the market, to which individuals are made to accommodate their thoughts and actions, produce a situation in which people work *only* as a matter of natural necessity, that is, to satisfy the basic conditions of human survival, and in doing so, they become subject to other practical constraints. These constraints include a strict division of labour which makes manifest the alienation from other human beings that exists whenever the activity performed by labouring individuals is not understood by the agents themselves to form part of a conscious common project. Rather, each worker is restricted to the performance of a limited task, and he or she thereby becomes indifferent to the equally limited tasks performed by others in the production process, as well as being indifferent to whatever these others produce. It is in this context that Marx speaks of ‘forced’ labour. Consequently, he claims in *The German Ideology* that until now the union (*Vereinigung*) of individuals has not been the voluntary one whose basis is the arbitrary will and free choice of individuals (*eine ... willkürliche*) described in Rousseau’s *Social Contract*, but, rather, a necessary one determined by the material conditions of human life and the division of labour, with the result that individuals are united by an ‘alien bond’ (Marx and Engels 1956-1990: 3, 75; Marx and Engels 1974: 85-86).

Part of what Marx means when he talks about this union based on necessity is, then, that with the capitalist mode of production and its division of labour individuals work together with others in order to survive *and for no other reason*. This invites the question of what would represent a genuinely voluntary form of association in the realm of necessity. Rousseau’s idea that moral freedom requires that individuals are subject to constraints that derive from their own wills and the way in which for him this freedom finds political expression in a situation in which individuals are the authors of the laws that they are obliged to obey provide some clues to Marx’s answer to this question. This answer can be viewed as an attempt to explain the compatibility of freedom and constraint in terms of laws that are self-imposed, provided

the term 'law' is taken in a sufficiently broad sense to mean something like a general rule of action.

If the association of workers in communist society is to be a genuinely voluntary one, despite belonging to the realm of necessity, the constraints to which the members of this association are subject must in some sense be genuine products of their own wills. Now, in the case of material production, nature, as the given substrate of the workers' activity, cannot be classed as a product of their own wills. The means of production could be classed as such, but only in the loose sense that tools and machines must first be invented and produced by human beings in the course of history. In capitalist society, however, these means of interacting with nature with a view to satisfying human needs confront individuals as a given, alien power that dominates them in the form of private property. Although socialization of the means of production in communist society might allow the means of production to lose their alien character in this sense, this would take us only so far, because for each individual worker the means of production would typically not be something that he or she has played an active role in producing, as is required by the idea that they are a product of his or her *own* will in the relevant sense. Rather, the workers will operate something that is already there and that in this respect confronts them as something given, if not as something entirely alien to them. Thus, it would be stretching the point to say that the constraints to which the workers are here subject, such as having to use a particular machine for a certain task or having to operate a machine in prescribed way, can be regarded as products of their own wills simply in virtue of the fact that the means of production are collectively owned.

The workers could nevertheless agree among themselves how the production process should be organized and carried out with the given means at their disposal. This would include collectively deciding such matters as who does what and when, how long each person works each day, as well as other technical or practical matters that are not predetermined by the nature of the machinery employed or the task at hand, but instead demand the exercise of judgement, such as how long to keep a machine running or the best materials to use when different options exist, none of which is self-evidently preferable to another one. Another matter that might require deliberation on the part of the workers is the question of what to produce and in what quantity, given the existence of certain social needs and such factors as population size.⁹ In each case, that which the workers agree upon among themselves is likely to take the form of some kind of rule which each worker is subsequently obliged to obey. This allows us to speak of constraints to which individuals are subject that have their source in these individuals' own wills, even though these constraints at the same time have a source which is independent of

their wills, in that the constraints in question must ultimately be explained in terms of the necessity to produce goods to satisfy society's material needs.

Marx allows, however, that any complex creative process involving the cooperation of many individuals may require a 'governing will' that provides a point of unification, and in this connection he employs the analogy of an orchestra that plays under a conductor (*Direktor*) (Marx and Engels 1956-1990: 25, 397; Marx 1991: 507). When applied to a workplace in which workers are subject to such a governing will, in addition to being subject to the type of united or 'general' will outlined above, this analogy might be thought to represent an unfortunate one, because conductors can exhibit authoritarian tendencies, while an orchestra could function without a conductor. Nevertheless, even in the case of a conductor who imposes his or her interpretation of a piece of music on an orchestra, the members of the orchestra may have agreed among themselves that this conductor is the one most likely to provide the best interpretation of a musical score, and that the orchestra can fulfil its full potential with this conductor at the helm rather than another one or without any conductor at all. The constraints that are generated by obedience to a governing will might then be regarded as something to which each individual engaged in this cooperative undertaking voluntarily subjects him- or herself. In this way, self-determination can be viewed as compatible with the existence of a governing will, whose authority ultimately derives from the united or 'general' will of the musicians or, by analogy, that of the workers.

On the basis of what has already been argued, the compatibility of freedom and constraint in the realm of necessity amounts to a state of affairs in which each individual's role in the production process has a voluntarist element which leaves room for the idea that the thoughts and actions of individuals are not determined by an alien power. Rather, the workers determine among themselves what their roles in the production process will be and other ways in which this process is to be organized. It would then also not be a matter of working simply in order to earn a wage that enables one to secure the means of subsistence as it is in capitalist society. Instead, by determining in association with others the conditions in and under which they labour, individuals are now in the position to exercise and develop certain distinctively human capacities, such as the capacity to deliberate and to engage in acts of self-direction. The exercise of these capacities might in turn explain how working comes to possess a value that is to some extent independent of the value it possesses in virtue of being a means of securing the basis material conditions of human existence both for oneself and for others. Engaging in acts deliberation and acts of self-direction might become needs in themselves when the performance of these acts is experienced as fulfilling in virtue of the fact that one thereby

realizes (if only partially) one's human essence. There would then be an internal relation between the exercise and development of distinctively human capacities (self-realization) and the act of organizing production in association with others (self-determination), in so far as engaging in this act entails the exercise and development of these same capacities. To this extent, work would lose the purely instrumental character it possesses when someone works simply in order to survive.

We here begin to see how work might become not merely a means to live but one of life's foremost needs, if not *the* foremost need, as Marx himself claims in the *Critique of the Gotha Programme*. This is not to say that the extent to which self-determination is exercised and the corresponding degree of individual self-realization cannot vary. Indeed, the fact that they can vary is, I want to argue, what explains how freedom in the realm of necessity in communist society differs from freedom in the realm of 'true' freedom. What is more, Marx himself provides an account of the type of mechanism which might explain how the act of associating with others on purely instrumental grounds spontaneously loses its purely instrumental character to become valuable in itself in the following passage describing the associational form of life enjoyed by workers in France that he had observed:

When communist *workmen* gather together [*sich vereinen*], their immediate aim is instruction, propaganda, etc. But at the same time they acquire a new need – the need for society – and what appears as a means has become an end. This practical development can be most strikingly observed when one sees French socialist workers united [*vereinigt*]. Smoking, eating and drinking, etc., are no longer means of creating links between people. Company, association [*Verein*], conversation, which in its turn has society as its goal, is enough for them. The brotherhood of man is not a hollow phrase, with them it is a truth, and the nobility of man shines forth upon us from their work-worn figures. (Marx and Engels 1956-1990: 40, 553-554; Marx 1992: 365; translation modified)

This passage begins with individuals who initially associate with each other as a matter of practical necessity, in that they cannot otherwise realize certain ends that they have, not only as individuals but also as members of the same class, ends which in this particular case concern the common need to defend and further the interests they share as workers. This act of association based on individual and collective self-interest generates in time, however, a need to associate with others that is independent of the interests that first motivated each individual

to join forces with others with whom he or she shares certain interests. This need to associate with others cannot, therefore, be identified with these interests. Rather, the act of associating with others and the particular social activities that define this act is an independent need with an intrinsic value, in that the source of motivation for engaging in them is not to be identified with some pre-existing desire that each individual seeks to satisfy in a purely instrumental fashion. Since in the passage from the third volume of *Capital* that we are analysing Marx speaks of ‘socialized’ human beings, we must assume, in fact, that the workers have already developed this need to associate with others on non-instrumental grounds.¹⁰

As argued above, the act of working can likewise come to possess an intrinsic value in virtue of how individuals, in association with others, engage in a common project that enables them to experience certain human goods that would not have been available to them independently of this act of association and engagement in a common project. This would overcome the alienation from other human beings that for Marx characterizes the capitalist mode of production. Moreover, since the workers exercise collective control over the productive forces and the process of production, they would no longer be at the mercy of impersonal economic and social forces and subject to the constraints that these forces generate in relation to their own wills. When this possibility is viewed in conjunction with the way in which the act of producing in association with others allows for the development of such distinctively human capacities as the power to deliberate and to exercise self-direction, it is no longer necessary to think of individual workers as being alienated from their productive activity or from their species-being. The workers would also no longer have to be regarded as alienated from the product of labour, for they would now have some control over the conditions under which objects are produced.

To sum up the point that we have reached, there is now a situation in which the act of working may come to possess an intrinsic value at the same time as it occurs in the realm of necessity, in that individuals come to experience certain human goods that this act of association makes possible and that are therefore internal to the practice of engaging with others in a common project, rather than being goods to which the act of working serves merely as the means to an end, as when something is produced only with the intention to consume it. What is more, the act of production, now that it no longer has an alienated character and in virtue of the element of self-determination that it involves, allows individuals to exercise certain distinctively human capacities, and thereby to develop them in association with others. In this way, individuals enjoy expressive freedom through being able to realize their human essence, whereas this possibility does not exist in the realm of necessity as found in capitalist

society. Thus satisfaction can be found in the act of producing not only for oneself but also for others. This is not, however, because the act of producing in association with others serves some external goal which is realized by means of this act. Rather, it is because producing for others forms part of a common project in which individual self-realization goes hand in hand with the self-realization of others with whom and for whom one produces objects that satisfy human needs. If, however, overcoming alienation is held to require that the object produced is itself in some way expressive of its creator in a personal sense through its possession of certain distinctive properties, what I have proposed is admittedly not sufficient to overcome alienation.¹¹ Yet it is extremely difficult to see how this requirement could be met in the case of the production of mass goods that is typical of a modern industrial economy, and when in communist society, even if what is produced is dictated by society's needs, there would surely be many cases in which individuals would not, and could not, be involved in each and every stage of the production of one and the same object.

It is precisely here that we begin to see why Marx would want to claim that it is only beyond the realm of necessity that the 'true realm of freedom, the development of human powers as an end in itself' exists, and that the shortening of the working day is the basic condition of this sphere of freedom. For it is only when human beings are freed from the constraints generated by the necessity of producing objects aimed at satisfying the material needs of society that they can dedicate themselves to genuinely personal projects. These projects do not, however, have to be purely arbitrary or solitary ones, and they may, therefore, generate their own constraints that concern the conditions of realizing these projects. The constraints in question will nevertheless be truly self-imposed ones in the sense that the needs of society do not require that individuals engage in the activities associated with a particular project or that a particular project is adopted in the first place.

The explanation of the compatibility of freedom and constraint in the realm of necessity that I have offered rests on what I consider to be a defensible account of freedom and it does not require making controversial claims about the fulfilling nature of certain types of work. Nor does it rest on any strong essentialist assumptions.¹² Any dismissal of Marx's explanation of how necessity is compatible with freedom in a future communist society on such grounds as its 'impracticality' or that it would result in inefficiencies would itself require justification. This is because simply asserting such claims invites the response that what we have is simply a lack of imagination or the unwillingness to consider alternatives to the capitalist mode of production. Indeed, such claims might be viewed as little more than ideological attempts to close down debate about how to organize society with a view to maximizing the extent and the

quality of the freedom that human beings enjoy. In this respect claims of this kind correspond to the type of claim made by the ‘bourgeois consciousness’ that Marx criticizes for celebrating the division of the labour in the workshop while denouncing any attempt to control and regulate production socially as a violation of the rights of property, freedom and ‘the self-determining “genius” of the individual capitalist’ (Marx and Engels 1956-1990: 23, 377; Marx 1990: 477). In other words, although control and regulation of the production process on a social scale is summarily dismissed, the capitalist himself controls and regulates the labour process in his own factories and thereby through his own actions demonstrates that control and regulation of the production process is not, in fact, a practical impossibility. This performative contradiction, Marx suggests, is ultimately to be explained in terms of the private and class interests of the capitalist. This explanation of the compatibility of freedom and necessity nevertheless invites the following question. If the material needs of individuals and society could be met without people having to work, or by working far less than before, and individuals had the opportunity to give adequate expression to their distinctively human capacities and their social nature in other ways, would a reason for individuals to work any longer exist? In relation to this point, I shall now explore some implications of Marx’s analogy between how production will be organized in communist society and how an orchestra functions.

On the one hand, let us assume that there is an orchestra made up of professional musicians, each and every one of which finds what they do fulfilling independently of the fact that it is how they earn a living, because engaging in the act of making music in association with other allows them to enjoy expressive freedom by exercising and developing certain distinctively human capacities in a way that accords with their social nature. Here it is not difficult to see how extrinsic and intrinsic forms of motivation perfectly coincide and how these musicians would, therefore, be motivated to engage in the same activity independently of the fact that it is a means of satisfying their material needs. On the other hand, let us assume the existence of a group of amateur musicians, for each of whom making music together before an audience is one of the greatest joys in life for the essentially the same reasons as in the previous case. These musicians are, however, less talented than the members of the professional orchestra, whose musical talent and accomplishments entitle them to a share of the social product.¹³ Consequently, the amateur musicians have to spend significant periods of their time operating machines, and, what is more, they find performing this activity to be a monotonous and unfulfilling one compared to the activity of making music together, even though they recognize the social necessity of what they do. This is not to say, however, that their involvement in the sphere of material production altogether denies them the opportunity to

exercise and develop the capacity for deliberation and self-direction through their direct involvement in the organization of the production process, nor the enjoyment of other human goods that are connected with the realization of one's social nature. I think it is fair to say, however, that the coincidence of extrinsic and intrinsic sources of motivation is no longer so self-evident, and that these amateur musicians might well, therefore, choose not to labour if the option not to do so were available to them, and they could instead dedicate themselves to making music together for the benefit not only of themselves but also of others who enjoy hearing them play.¹⁴

The fact that not everyone who wants to do so can, given the nature of things, be a professional musician, and that some human beings must continue to labour in the realm of necessity, means that the possibility of realizing oneself by playing an active, self-determining role in organizing the production process in association with others should nevertheless not be undervalued. This is especially the case if engaging in this type of activity to some extent facilitates self-realization and may come to possess an intrinsic value, if only of a limited kind. Rather, all three aspects of Marx's concept of freedom would then be present in the realm of necessity, though not to the same extent as they are present in the 'true' realm of freedom. Indeed, if this were not the case, an essential difference between communist society and capitalist society would disappear. Moreover, Marx has a good reason for claiming that self-realization, which depends on the exercise of the capacity for self-determination and the possibility of activities that possess an intrinsic value, must to some extent be possible even in the realm of necessity. This reason concerns the fact that individuals in communist society will typically be members of both the realm of necessity and the true realm of freedom. If an individual's membership of the realm of necessity did not allow for the possibility of self-determination, and thereby also excluded the possibility of self-realization and engagement in activities that possess some intrinsic value, a threat to the kind of freedom that characterizes the true realm of freedom would emerge. This threat concerns the way in which individuals would be potentially unprepared and not disposed to engage in activities that require the exercise of self-determination and to value the performance of certain activities for their own sake, as opposed to regarding these activities and other human beings involved in them simply as means to an end. Marx is himself keen to draw attention to how industrial labour under capitalism is incompatible with self-determination, and thus with self-realization and the possibility of activities that possess some kind of intrinsic value, in the following description of the effects of factory work:

Factory work exhausts the nervous system to the uttermost; at the same time, it does away with the many-sided play of the muscles, and confiscates every atom of freedom, both in bodily and in intellectual activity. Even the lightening of the labour becomes an instrument of torture, since the machine does not free the worker from the work, but rather deprives the work itself of all content. (Marx and Engels 1956-1990: 23, 445-446; Marx 1990: 548)

Given this description of the effects of labour in capitalist society, and how workers are denied the opportunity to exercise self-determination, resulting in the absence of expressive freedom and the reduction of the act of working to something that possesses only instrumental value, the following question arises: will the leisure time available to people who work under such conditions not then take on a passive and purely instrument character by being reduced to a means of dealing with the effects of having to labour in such conditions? Instead of offering individuals the opportunity for self-realization and self-fulfilment, this leisure time may instead be spent engaged in activities that require little, if any, exercise of the capacity to be self-determining and any other distinctively human capacities whose realization depends on the active employment of them. It would then be hard to see how the shortening of the working day would then be sufficient to open the way to the establishment of the 'true realm of freedom'. The exercise of the capacity for self-determination within the realm of necessity through engagement in activities that possess some intrinsic value can therefore be seen as another condition of entry into this true realm of freedom.

One does not have to be convinced by each and every aspect of Marx's idea of communist society to appreciate the potential significance of what he says about how the realm of necessity in this society will differ from how it is in capitalist society. Rather, Marx helps clarify how the realm of necessity would need to be reformed to allow for greater individual self-realization through the actual exercise of the capacity for self-determination, thereby enabling people to discover an intrinsic value in the act of producing to meet society's material needs in association with others. The task of clarifying this matter is surely an essential one for a society which proclaims that freedom and self-fulfilment are central elements of a truly human form of existence, but in which the organization of the production process is such that many people lack effective control over what they do and end up working merely to attain external ends, at the same time as there appears to be no obvious drive on the part of society in general to take advantage of technological advances to shorten the working day.¹⁵

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¹ See, for example, Kandiyali 2014, Klagge 1986 and Sayers 2011: 65-77.

² This notion of expressive freedom does not, as far as I can see, require locating Marx's account of alienation and how it can be overcome within the larger narrative of an 'expressivist' tradition, as Charles Taylor suggests must be done when he associates Marx with a tradition that aspires to some kind of wholeness that demands the overcoming of division and a reconciliation of opposites through which human beings achieve self-expression (Taylor 1975: 546-551).

³ Marx would not, therefore, regard the following case described by Hobbes as one that involves a voluntary act in any meaningful sense: 'Feare, and Liberty are consistent; as when a man throweth his goods into the Sea for *feare* the ship should sink, he doth it nevertheless very willingly, and may refuse to doe it if he will' (Hobbes 1996: 146).

⁴ Marx himself appears to argue that the needs associated with luxury goods are incompatible with true human interests because they generate relations of dependence that tend to result in the domination and exploitation of others. See Marx and Engels 1956-1990: 40, 546-547; Marx 1992: 358-359.

⁵ This understanding of negative freedom is found in Berlin 1958, where it is said to represent the only genuine idea of freedom, and we are warned not to confuse freedom with the lack of opportunity to do something because of economic or social causes. My point is that such causes can themselves be thought to involve conscious decisions and actions that result in interference with the lives of others.

⁶ As it is in Cohen 1988: 258

⁷ The capitalist class is, in fact, also subject to constraints in this regard. This is because the capitalist system depends on the existence of people who have only their labour to sell and have little choice but to sell it, so that although the existence of a wholly benevolent capitalist class is not inconceivable, its members could not collectively intend the freedom of each and every member of the proletariat, unless they intended at the same time to abolish the capitalist mode of production and thus the class to which they themselves belong. This helps explain Marx's claim that a closer examination of social relations and conditions that are external to individuals, in the sense that these relations and conditions are determined by a system of exchange that operates independently of the wills of individuals, shows that 'it is impossible for the individuals of a class etc. to overcome them *en masse* without destroying them. A particular individual may by chance get on top of these relations, but the mass of those under their rule cannot, since their mere existence expresses subordination, the necessary subordination of the mass of individuals' (Marx and Engels 1956-1990: 42, 97; Marx 1993: 164).

⁸ The importance of this form of freedom in Marx's philosophy is stressed in Wood 2004: 50-52.

⁹ To avoid the problematic idea that the full and free development of which Marx speaks requires that people in communist society engage in every possible activity, it has been claimed that what Marx in fact has in mind are different kinds of activities (Sayers 2011: 148-149). Already we can see how this requirement might be met, since in organizing production, as well as performing certain tasks within the production process, individuals would be able to engage both in intellectual and in manual forms of labour.

¹⁰ Some account of how the workers have become socialized is also necessary when it comes to explaining Marx's suggestion that the unalienated relations of workers to each other in communist society will be one in which each individual realizes him- or herself and affirms his or her species-being, not only by producing for others but also

by doing this in way that manifests a direct concern for their needs, rather than producing for others simply because this is a condition of getting them to produce for oneself. See Marx and Engels 1956-1990: 40, 462; Marx 1992: 277.

¹¹ This is not to say Marx does not make claims that suggest that this is indeed a requirement of the overcoming of alienation, as when he states the following about unalienated labour: ‘In my *production* I would have objectified the *specific character* of my *individuality* and for that reason I would both have enjoyed the *expression* of my own individual *life* during my activity and also, in contemplating the object, I would experience an individual pleasure, I would experience my personality as an *objective sensuously perceptible* power *beyond all shadow of doubt*’ (Marx and Engels 1956-1990: 40, 462; Marx 1992: 277). As we have seen, however, such claims can be explained in terms of the idea that by producing for others, as part of a collective project in which one determines in association with others the conditions under which production takes place, I enjoy a form of self-realization.

¹² The attempt has been made to demonstrate the relevance of the concept of alienation in a way that does not rest on any metaphysical, essentialist or perfectionist assumptions by focusing on certain purely formal requirements of free agency – especially how such agency presupposes the ability to make one’s own both that which one does and the conditions under which one does it - in abstraction from any particular conception of human nature or the good life and any other goals of willing (Jaeggi 2014). My argument does not require attributing to Marx a conception of human nature that extends beyond the capacity to exercise self-determination and the opportunity to exercise this capacity taken in conjunction with a claim about the essentially social nature of human beings. Thus, the argument that I have developed concerning the compatibility of freedom and necessity in communist society accords with the claim that alienation can be understood to arise from an obstruction of the ‘positive’ freedom which consists in the capacity to exercise self-determination and the actual exercise of this capacity (Jaeggi 2014: 35). The major difference is that Marx applies this concept of alienation and what it would mean to overcome alienation to a particular domain of life, namely the sphere of material production, while arguing that overcoming alienation in this sphere requires establishing conditions appropriate to the human being’s essentially social nature. As regards the first difference, given the necessity of this sphere, it is surely valid to ask how alienation understood in the relevant sense can be overcome, or at least minimized, within the sphere of material production, whereas the refusal of any purely formal account of the concept of alienation to engage with this issue can be regarded as a weakness rather than an advantage of it. As regards the second difference, although the claim that human beings are essentially social beings can be challenged, to assume a more individualist standpoint invites an objection that Marx himself had already articulated, namely, that such a standpoint is the historical product of a certain mode of production and its relations of production (i.e. capitalism) (Marx and Engels 1956-1990: 42, 19-20; Marx 1993: 84-84).

¹³ Presumably, there will be orchestras in communist societies, whose members’ material needs must be satisfied by society. Given that the members of the orchestra will not be engaged in an activity that belongs to the realm of necessity, the question of whether they should not also play their part in this realm arises. Marx makes claims that could be interpreted to demand that they do, as when he states the following in relation to how the increase in productivity made possible by the capitalist mode of production allows for the shortening of the working day: ‘The intensity and productivity of labour being given, the part of the social working day necessarily taken up with material production is shorter and, as a consequence, the time at society’s disposal for the free intellectual and social activity of the individual is greater, in proportion as work is more and more evenly divided among all the

able-bodied members of society, and a particular social stratum is more and more deprived of the ability to shift the burden of labour (which is a necessity imposed by nature) from its own shoulders to those of another social stratum' (Marx and Engels 1956-1990: 23, 552; Marx 1990: 667). Since it is not clear how engaging in material labour would provide the members of the orchestra with opportunities for self-realization and self-determination that they would otherwise lack, the main reason for their doing so would have to be that this enables others to spend less time engaged in this form of labour. Arguably, however, this benefit would have certain costs, such as in this case lower musical standards, and it might therefore be argued that the benefits gained would be offset by the disadvantages. For example, some people might have more time to learn to play and to master a musical instrument, but they and unmusical people would at the same time risk having to attend concerts performed by sub-standard orchestras or solo performers, with the result that an important source of inspiration would be lacking, which may in turn have a negative effect on their own general musical development and on the esteem in which music-making is held in society.

¹⁴ In this way the members of the group of amateur musicians would be able to realize themselves by producing for others but without engaging in material production. To claim that an element of self-realization would nevertheless be lacking requires showing that only material production, as opposed to aesthetic or cultural ways of producing for others, allows for self-realization in the relevant sense, and that participation in the realm of necessity is therefore a necessary condition of full self-realization.

¹⁵ Proposals such as the one for a universal basic income might be seen to represent an important step in this direction. However, there are competing accounts of the level of income required and the reasons for it, some of which may be in the spirit of Marx's claim that the working day must be shortened to make possible and to expand the true realm of freedom, whereas others appeal to the desirability of reducing welfare payments and counterbalancing the tendency of employers to lower wages or salaries. The universal basic income can, in other words, function as a subsidy to employers, and far from increasing the bargaining power of workers, it would have to be set low enough to force people to work. For more details, see *Le Monde diplomatique*, 'Le revenu garanti et ses faux amis', July 2016. The last position is, of course, compatible with Marx's views on the functioning of the realm of necessity in capitalist society.